

# PROMOTING STAYING, COMING AND RETURNING

Action guide  
for developing the  
SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION

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Living / working / culture of welcoming & appreciation /  
networking & communication

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# THE PROJECT

The project "Alliance for the Development of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION" (ITAT 3029), which was launched in 2019, has set itself the task of creating a guideline for action in order to enhance the topic of "stay and come" jointly and across regions and to orient the topic towards the future. A special focus is on the people of the region and presenting the region as an additional, attractive living option, alongside the conurbations of Bolzano, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt.

With this goal in mind, four subject areas were promoted and worked on: **living, working, a culture of welcoming and appreciation, and networking and communication.**

## THE SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION

connects the districts of Hermagor and Spittal an der Drau in Upper Carinthia and East Tyrol with the South Tyrolean Pustertal.

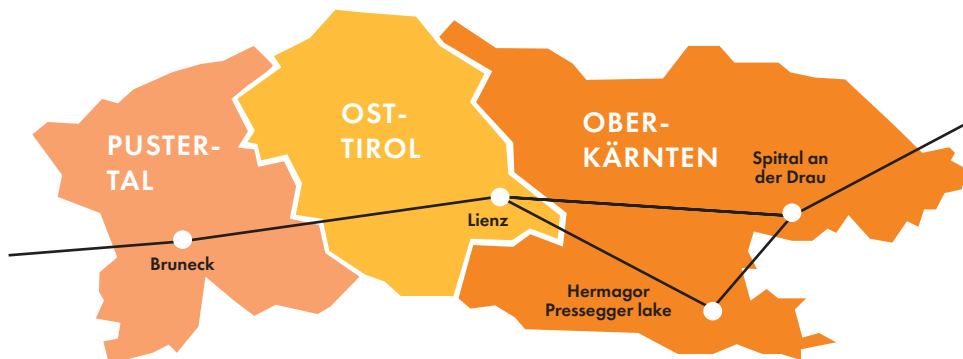
The population of the associated regions has decreased significantly in recent years and decades. Another demographic trend is that the proportion of people over 64 is increasing, while that of people of working age will decrease.

Against this background, the question arises of how to shape the region's future as a job-creating region. The citizens of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION are not only strongly connected to one another because of their shared history, but above all through their everyday life. So it stands to reason that these areas should join forces and use their already existing potential to upgrade the entire SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION and make it fit for the future.

**230,000**  
Residents

**7,667**  
km<sup>2</sup>

**30**  
Population / m<sup>2</sup>



# CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION - WHY?



## BACKGROUND

In addition to natural demographic changes such as births and deaths, migration is a driving force behind the developments described. In particular, the peripheral areas of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION have been witnessing emigration, especially of young and highly educated people, to the more dynamic urban centres for some time.

At the same time, however, a change in society itself is also underway. For many, remote Alpine regions are not only becoming attractive again as a place to live, but also as a fully-fledged centre for life. This development is reinforced by the new and future realities of work, advancing digitisation and, last but not least, the increasing range of ecological and natural philosophies of life.

Border regions make up around 40% of the European Union. More than a third of the citizens, i.e. around 150 million people, live in such areas. Many of them commute to work or study in a neighbouring country. Border areas are therefore mostly closely intertwined. However, administrative, legal, linguistic and cultural barriers often make cross-border cooperation more difficult, so that functional spaces are different.

But the challenges that rural border regions such as the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION are confronted with also offer opportunities. The team behind this project is convinced that willingness to cooperate can make better use of these possibilities and potentials and thus establish a more attractive living and creative space.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The guidelines for the development of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION are starting with emotional driving forces (family, friends, landmarks, local values) and location factors. Taking into account the staying, coming and returning population, the task is to initiate a trend reversal in the region, moving it from a relatively passive space to an absolutely active space. To this end, the efforts that are already visible in many ways and the existing but spatially dispersed potential are to be bundled and strengthened.

The aim is to implement initial or further measures which support the development of a resilient, functional SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION in order to maintain quality of life in its regions and thus encourage staying, coming and returning. The decisive factor here is, among other things, a step towards size, functionality and visibility.

The SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION should thus become an innovative and sustainable future-oriented region in Europe, which can serve as a role model for other border regions and create a new, regional, European and cosmopolitan awareness through cooperation on equal terms. However, this goal can only be achieved if many social groups, organisations and decision-makers take up this issue and participate.



# HOUSING

Finding a suitable, attractive and affordable home is a basic requirement for newcomers and returners as well as for those who remain who are facing a restructuring of their housing situation.

In doing so, they are often confronted with high prices, a lack of choice and availability, and simply with an unattractive offer. The wide range of individuals' very different living needs also poses a challenge. These arise from socio-cultural characteristics,

demographic factors (age, gender, marital status) and socio-economic status (level of education, employment, income, assets). The following points can be identified as the most important aspects for fulfilling housing needs: construction quality, (quick) availability, flexible duration of residence, use (ownership or rent), affordability and location and living environment.

**This indicates three fields of action, which are to be addressed through various respective measures.**

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## THE DEMAND SIDE OF THE HOUSING MARKET

The offer should be geared specifically to those who are actually interested, and to their needs and possibilities.

- **Systematic recording of requirements and opportunities**

## INFORMATION AND ADVICE

In order to facilitate access to the housing market, a place for networking supply and demand is to be created. In addition, obstacles must be removed through targeted assistance.

- **Housing market contact and information point**
- **Creation of a central platform**

## VACANCY MANAGEMENT

Unused living space and the conversion of vacant commercial space / farm buildings hold enormous potential for the expansion of attractive housing options. The (re-) creation of vacancies enables a general expansion of available housing and is intended to increase the attractiveness of the inner-city area.

- **Information and networking events**
- **Vacancy monitoring**
- **Creation of a point of contact**
- **Activation of vacancy in public hands**
- **Re-zoning and municipal usage concepts**
- **Support for the use of vacancies. Rental incentives for owners**

# WORK

The existence of attractive work opportunities for oneself and also for accompanying persons (such as life partners) are a crucial prerequisite for moving to the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION. Conversely, this means that this is an approach which can be used to make staying in the region more attractive.

In the course of doing so, different levels need to be considered. On the one hand, companies from various industries in the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION are constantly looking for workers with qualifications in technical and practical professions. On the other hand,

it is important to promote the perception of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION as an attractive place to work for employees who hold vocational qualifications. Today, in addition to being (dependent) employees, many people are also active as entrepreneurs or as self-employed. The attractiveness of the SOUTHERN ALPINE SPACE as a place to work can therefore also be strengthened by providing these people with suitable framework conditions.

**Against the background of the respective regional job offers, there are three fields of action.**

## APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are an attractive option for young people, but spaces often remain unfilled. These should be promoted and adequately advertised by intensifying the provision of information and creating opportunities for professional orientation and networking processes. The aim is to offer local young people attractive training and jobs in order to be able to keep them in the region.

→ **Information and advertising in schools**

## SKILLED WORKERS

At the level of the company, trade associations, labour market service institutions / district-level employment agencies and the municipalities, networking and appropriate awareness-raising initiatives must take place. In order to activate existing and new potential, the persons accompanying migrant professionals should also be integrated into the regional labour market.

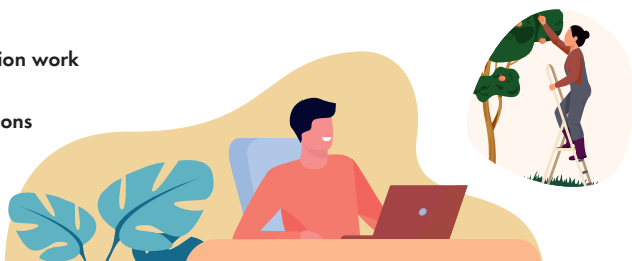
→ **Joint marketing and communication work internally and externally**

→ **Retraining of accompanying persons**

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INDEPENDENCE

The creation of fertile ground for entrepreneurial thinking and independence should prevent brain drain of innovative ideas, and attract new entrepreneurs from outside. In addition, the promotion of a creative climate that enables a maximum of openness, freedom and initiative is of great importance.

- **Awareness raising in schools**
- **Creation of new (digital) infrastructures to support the realisation of ideas**
- **Strengthening the public relations work of existing infrastructures**
- **Advice to entrepreneurs and the self-employed**
- **Networking of entrepreneurs and the self-employed**



# A CULTURE OF WELCOMING AND APPRECIATION

This is to be understood as a fundamental attitude of openness and acceptance that applies not only to people with foreign roots, but to all newcomers and returnees.

The culture of recognition and welcoming concerns not only formal regulations, but above all the “how?": How does a region deal with its new residents in preparation for an arrival or a return and in the time afterwards? The needs of those people are primarily determined by their

place of origin, language skills, phase of life, marital status, living and work situation as well as by their personal interests.

In general, a culture of welcoming and recognition describes a social climate characterised by openness to new ideas and which allows all people to develop their personal potential.

**The following fields of activity should be mentioned here.**

## SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Certain questions often arise in the course of planning a move, or shortly after arrival. A good network connecting municipal advice centres with relevant actors (e.g. social services) and a guarantee of empathic, personal and individual advice are essential.

- **Municipal advice centres**
- **Regional digital welcome centres**
- **Language courses**

## SOCIAL OPENNESS AND INTEGRATION

In order to promote an attitude, of openness inhibitions towards authorities and official bodies must be reduced and a feeling of “welcome” must be emphasised. Rigid and traditional structures should be relaxed and a general awareness of intercultural coexistence should be developed.

- **Communication guide for administration of the official reception of newcomers**
- **Open association work**
- **Intercultural encounter opportunities;**
- **Sensitisation at educational institutions**
- **Intercultural opening and diversity management on the part of employers**





# NETWORKING & COMMUNICATION

A future-oriented development of the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION requires more intensive supra-regional networking and common internal and external communication. Internally, this ensures a stronger community; externally it has a positive influence on perceptions of the region.

For this purpose, structures can be used that already exist at various levels in the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION. To this end, these should be expanded, optimised and networked

intelligently in order to avoid parallel structures and unclear responsibilities. It is essential to set up a working group that deals with demographic change and consists of members of the regional welcome centres, those involved in internal and external communications, and representatives of the civilian population. At least one person should have full-time responsibility for the continuous supervision of the “Stay and come” topic.

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## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The aim should be to ensure coordinated internal and external communications. A shared model for communications across the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION is needed, to provide a basis for this.

It is not about putting the “stamp of the southern Alps” on individual sub-regions, but rather the idea is that regional characteristics should be valued and communicated under a common umbrella brand.

→ **Guidelines for indoor and outdoor communications**

## INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Care must be taken to ensure that the supra-regional level is closely networked with the relevant actors at the regional and local level.

The implementation of the topic “Stay and Come” is basically intended to promote the region as a place to live and work, especially for younger people, and to encourage returns and arrivals. This is intended to make the SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION home which is consciously chosen.

→ **Establishment of an integrated platform and contact point**

→ **Governance in relation to the topic of “stay and come”**

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## Imprint

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### SOUTHERN ALPINE REGION

This handout was created in the Interreg VI-A Italy-Austria 2014-2020 program for the "Alliance for the Development of the Southern Alps" / ITAT 3029 project. The handout can be seen as a short version. The complete guidelines can be requested from the Regional Management LAG Pustertal: [info@rm-pustertal.eu](mailto:info@rm-pustertal.eu)

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